

## MEDICAL WASTE DISPOSAL SYSTEM

This application is a Continuation of prior Application No. 09/845,976, filed April 30, 2001. The entire disclosure of U.S. Patent Application No. 09/845,976 is expressly incorporated by reference herein.

*now U.S. Patent No. 7,114,629*

*Sjc*  
11-27-07

### 5 FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to the disposal of contaminated items and, in particular, to a system for use in a hospital or a similar environment where contaminated items are to be collected and disposed of without creating a hazard for patients or hospital personnel.

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### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

In hospitals, clinics and similar medical institutions, contamination continues to be of upmost concern. The prevention of the spread of communicable diseases is a major priority; therefore, disposable, single-use, patient care products have become prevalent.

15 Such patient care products are contaminated, once used, and can transmit disease. These patient care products include devices such as hypodermic needles, intravenous needles, lasers, scalpel blades or other sharps -- all of which are required to be disposed at their point of usage under current guidelines of the United States Centers for Disease Control.

20 Various disposal containers for medical waste have been proposed for the purpose of preventing individuals from gaining access to contaminated items, such as sharps, once the waste has been deposited into the container. For example, a waste container having a top with a slidable closure is disclosed by Mosior in U.S. Patent No. 5,531,346. The top of the waste container disclosed by Mosior has an access aperture, and the slidable closure  
25 on the top is positioned to slide between opened and closed positions. The closure